

22 May 1959

SUBJECT: Significant Developments Regarding the CIA Periodic Requirements List (PRL)

Since the AD/CI briefed his 16 June 1958 staff meeting regarding the CIA Periodic Requirements List (PRL), considerable progress has been made as to its wider use, dissemination, and effectiveness. Because analysts in CIA and in the Department of State are devoting substantial efforts in revising and improving the List, some of these major developments should be noted.

I Why the PRL?

The objective of the PRL is to keep collectors at home and abroad alerted to current intelligence needs so that information coming in from the field will improve both in quality and quantity and thereby help strengthen the production of current intelligence.

25X6 Accordingly, each PRL on the major world areas--USSR, European Satellites and Yugoslavia, [REDACTED] Latin America, Near East, Africa, and Far East--is designed to point up the information required for current intelligence coverage of significant developments during the PRL's 4-month time period. Prepared for, and used by, members of the intelligence community, the PRL fills a major intelligence need which has not been met by the longer term, basic requirements guides of various governmental agencies.

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III State Department Participation in the PRL

As of April 1959, coordination between OCI and the Department of State in revising the area PRL's became a fact on a world-wide basis. This coordination, which began informally and on a limited scale at the end of 1957, was steadily extended during the past year to cover each area on the following schedule: Latin America PRL, beginning with the April 1958 issue; USSR/EE, with the May 1958 edition; Far East, with the June 1958 issue; Near East/Africa, with the July 1958 edition; and [redacted] with the April 1959 PRL.

State's use of the PRL has increased since the coordinated OCI-State effort was initiated. Copies are being sent, not only to the Embassies, but also to the Consulates and Consulates General. Moreover, additional copies have been made available to State Department headquarters personnel.

Though still too early to measure the overall effectiveness of CIA-State coordination on the PRL, certain values have become apparent. The preparation of each PRL now receives constructive comments from both the Intelligence Research Offices and the Regional Policy Bureaus of the State Department. Thanks to the fine efforts of State analysts, liaison and requirements personnel, the contributions regularly submitted by OCI, ORR, and OSI in CIA are being substantively supplemented and strengthened.

To varying degrees, all of the area PRL's have been the subject of replies from Embassies and Consulates abroad. State's coordination with OCI has been an important factor in this response. Detailed answers, question by question, were received, for example, on one or more sections of the country lists from: the Embassy in Tehran, [redacted] the Embassy in Caracas, the Consulate in Aden, the Embassies in Port-au-Prince and in Lima. Examples of specific reports in response to PRL questions are: "Kurds of Iran" (from Tabriz), "Soviet Bloc Activities in Yemen" (from Aden), Economic questions and Communist data (from Bogota), [redacted]

and the importance of the Uruguayan President (from Montevideo). These reports, of course, are examples only of those in which the PRL was specifically referenced. They do not include the field reports initiated as a result of PRL requirements.

IV. Attitudes of US Officials and Missions

From Western Europe a State official recently wrote the Department in Washington that "...in some cases Political Sections (of the Embassies) have considered the List the best reporting guide available to them. The reason is that... the List deals with specific problems in a specific country..."

Last fall a State official who returned to Washington from Latin America reported that "with respect to the PRL's, most of the officers in Brazil and Uruguay regard them as currently or potentially useful."

In February 1959 the US Consul General who had just returned from Dacca in East Pakistan expressed satisfaction with the PRL because it informed him of both State and CIA current intelligence needs.

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At CIA headquarters, [redacted] in his article, "Spy at your clandestine collection requirements in the Spring 1959 edition of OTR's "Studies in Service, Sir", in the Spring 1959 edition of OTR's "Studies in Intelligence." Commenting specifically on the PRL's, [redacted] wrote that "though not tailored to clandestine collection, they are valuable guides for the covert operator. They are improving rapidly in comprehensiveness and general quality."

V. Contributions to the PRL

In the past year definite efforts have been made to obtain from analysts in CIA -- in OCI, ORR, and OSI -- as well as in the State Department, contributions to the PRL that are as up-to-date, specific and as helpful as possible to field collectors. The Department of the Army's ACSI has begun to contribute on an informal basis, and the Navy Department has also expressed an interest in contributing.

Of additional help to field collectors, the PRL's now include major intelligence deficiencies noted in the Post-Mortems of appropriate National Intelligence Estimates (NIE's) approved by the US Intelligence Board (USIB)--the principal governing body for US intelligence agencies under the chairmanship of the DCI.

VI. Wider Dissemination of the PRL

The growing interest of the USIB community in the PRL has resulted in an increase over previous demands for the latest copies of the PRL, amounting to some 100 to 200 additional copies. At the present time the number of copies disseminated to interested collectors and consumers is: 518 copies for the USSR PRL, 515 for the European Satellites and Yugoslavia, 488 for Near East/Africa, 384 [redacted] 341 for the Far East, and 339 copies for the Latin America issue.

Those receiving the latest copies of the PRL on a regular basis are:

CIA Offices:

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OO/C (Headquarters and Field Stations), as well as [redacted] and FDI
DD/P (Headquarters and Field Stations), including [redacted]
OIS, Strategic Division [redacted]
tives [redacted] [redacted]
ONE, OCI, ORR, OSI, OCR, and OTR

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VI. Wider Dissemination of the PRL (Continued)
Department of State (Headquarters and Embassies, Consulates
General, and Consulates Abroad)

Defense Department (Army, Navy, and Air Departments)

NSA, USIA, NIC (National Indications Center), USIB Secretariat

VII. Current Problems

Despite the continued improvement in the PRL and the favorable reaction of collectors to the List, two major problems are still evident in its preparation:

A. Updating the PRL:

Many analysts in the production offices submit well-revised drafts for the new PRL's, but there are still a substantial number who fail to give adequate time for reviewing the major intelligence deficiencies and for updating requirements for the use of the field collectors. Since the revision of each area PRL comes up only once every 4 months, failure to make a careful updating of the Country Lists in effect ignores a valuable opportunity to guide the various field collectors in providing certain types of information especially wanted by the substantive analysts.

Several times analysts have re-submitted country requirements from the old PRL's almost without change--in some cases where significant political and economic changes were actually taking place at the time of revision. Such unrevised requirements, since they are at the very least four months' old, are of little value to the various collectors in the field; they do not put sufficient emphasis on current or future trends, and they fail to recognize questions that have been answered, all or in part, during the time since the previous PRL was written.

In an effort to help analysts update their country requirements, on the other hand, one area branch chief advised his analysts to keep a file of information gaps, complaints about inadequate field reporting and other current problems that need to be covered by the embassies and field stations. Then, when the PRL comes up for review at the end of the four-month time period, these notes are available for alerting the field as to headquarter's current intelligence interests.

B. Overcrowding the PRL:

In reviewing the PRL's, there is a need for analysts, not only to submit new significant requirements, but also to revise or eliminate out-dated or even purely basic requirements. Unless this is done, there is the danger that the new, most

VII. Current Problems (Continued)

significant questions will be buried in an unnecessarily lengthy list of requirements and that field collectors will, in effect, be asked to spend valuable time and effort on problems of little, or out-dated, importance.

In this connection, one Embassy which recently answered, question by question, one of the sections of a current country PRL and which also promised forthcoming despatches on two other major sections, expressed the hope that "all of these despatches will help clear the decks and point up more briefly and definitely the really important items on which information is required." It is true that the necessary lag between the time when the requirements are prepared and the time when the questions reach the field means that some requirements will be outdated through no fault of the originating analysts. It is still also true, however, that many of the revised country drafts would prove more helpful to the field if a careful "look-see" were made at the old PRL questions, either to revise or to eliminate outdated and unimportant questions

VIII. Conclusion

If all contributing production offices in CIA, as well as in State, continue in their present efforts to improve the quality of the PRL's and as analysts and other headquarters personnel concerned realize the value of keeping field collectors alerted to headquarters needs, the purpose of the PRL's will be adequately attained. This objective is to provide the field collectors at home and abroad with specific, up-to-date intelligence requirements, so that the field, in turn, may better fill current intelligence gaps wherever possible and forward to headquarters a steadily improving quality of current information for use by our intelligence production offices.

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